



Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators
Proud Leadership for Pennsylvania Schools

Education Update
January 21, 2020

In Budget & Finance News...

2020 Census and Funding – During a press event in the Capitol Rotunda last week, Gisele Fetterman, wife of Lt. Gov. John Fetterman, along with state officials, reminded Pennsylvanians to participate in the 2020 federal census. Fetterman plans to visit numerous areas across the state to encourage full participation in the census-taking, which begins in April.

Norman Bristol Colón, executive director of the governor's Census 2020 Complete Count Commission, noted that the census is a one-shot deal. There's no recounts. Once the population count is submitted to President Donald Trump at the end of the year, that's considered the official population of Pennsylvania for the next 10 years and the state's share of federal funding will be based on it. To emphasize why accuracy matters, he said if one classroom of 35 students in each of the 500 school districts is missed, that's \$36 million a year the state would lose out on and \$360 million over the decade. "Everyone in Pennsylvania is everyone's business," he said. "We must count everyone." \

Pennsylvania now receives \$26.8 billion annually in federal funding for programs such as the Children's Health Insurance Program, nutritional services for senior citizens, block grants for affordable housing, highway and bridge construction and repairs, special education, and federal direct student loans. Certain populations often get overlooked including children under 5 years of age, said Human Services Secretary Teresa Miller. But getting an accurate count of this population group is critical to the federal funding for early education and health services. "These programs are very important for working families around Pennsylvania," Miller said. "Without a complete and accurate count that includes all children in a household, Pennsylvania's allocation may be adversely affected."

Pennsylvania is among seven states that has seen population trend downward and is likely to lose a congressional seat in 2023. The Wolf Administration has allocated \$4 million to help secure an accurate census count. [Click here](#) for the official Pennsylvania census website. (as reported in *The Patriot-News*, and information from Pennsylvania Legislative Services)

In Charter School & Voucher News...

Striking the Voucher Vote – State House Democrats have accused House Speaker Mike Turzai, the chamber's top Republican, of twice failing to record votes against bills he supports this week, in violation of the chamber's rules. The two votes at issue involved a bill imposing mandatory minimum sentences for certain for gun crimes, sponsored by Rep. Todd Stephens, R-Montgomery. The other was an amendment to a Turzai-sponsored bill ([HB 1800](#)) authorizing school vouchers for the Harrisburg School District. According to House Democrats, the minority party, both measures were defeated in bipartisan, majority votes, but the final results were not recorded. *Read the rest of the story:* "[House Democrats Accuse Speaker Turzai of Making Votes on Defeated Bills Disappear](#)" (from the Pennsylvania Capital-Star, 1/14/20).

Press Event on Charter School Reform – Superintendents from Fulton, Huntingdon, Mifflin and Juniata County School Districts will join the Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools (PARSS) in calling for reforms to Pennsylvania's charter school law. Tuscarora Intermediate Unit 11 will host a public meeting at 11 a.m. Jan. 27 in which administrators from more than a half-dozen area school districts will be present. They will join members of PARSS in 152 school districts encompassing 34 counties and 16 intermediate units in holding press conferences during the week of January 27 to 31. The press conference will call attention to the urgent need of reforms to Pennsylvania's charter school law and to share the adverse impact that inflated charter and cyber charter school tuition payments have on students and taxpayers in their communities. *Read the rest of the story:* "[Local School Districts Seek Reform to Pa. Charter School Laws](#)" (from *The Lewistown Sentinel*, 1/17/20).

New Hampshire: Rejecting Charter School Grants – It's pretty obvious by now that many Democrats are growing increasingly uncomfortable supporting charter schools. But twice in nearly the past 30 days, a group of New Hampshire legislators have taken the unusual step of essentially rejecting federal charter school grants awarded by the U.S. Department of Education last year. The first vote was 7-3, with all Democrats voting it down and all Republicans voting in favor of it. Democrats made the argument that once the grant support for the expansion of new charter schools runs out after five years, the state would be on the hook for keeping the charter schools up and running without the grants. Last week, the same vote took place again, with the same result. One Democratic lawmaker said that if the state education department is applying for grants specifically for charter schools, it should also seek out additional federal aid to traditional public schools. *Read the rest of the story:* [“Betsy DeVos Gave a State Charter School Grants. Lawmakers Have Said No Thanks, Twice”](#) (from *Education Week*, 1/15/20).

In School Health and Safety News...

California: Air Filters and Test Scores – An emergency situation that turned out to be mostly a false alarm led a lot of schools in Los Angeles to install air filters, and something strange happened: Test scores went up. By a lot. And the gains were sustained in the subsequent year rather than fading away. That's what NYU's Michael Gilraine finds in a new working paper titled [“Air Filters, Pollution, and Student Achievement”](#) that looks at the surprising consequences of the Aliso Canyon gas leak in 2015. The impact of the air filters is strikingly large given what a simple change we're talking about. The school district didn't reengineer the school buildings or make dramatic education reforms; they just installed \$700 commercially available filters that you could plug into any room in the country. But it's consistent with a growing literature on the cognitive impact of air pollution, which finds that everyone from chess players to baseball umpires to workers in a pear-packing factory suffer deteriorations in performance when the air is more polluted. *Read the rest of the story:* [“Installing Air Filters in Classrooms Has Surprisingly Large Educational Benefits”](#) (from vox.com, 1/8/20).

In Legislative News...

Session Schedule – The House returns to session two days this week and the Senate next week for three days (Jan. 27-29). Both chambers will be in session for three days in early February, as Gov. Wolf unveils his 2020-21 state budget plan on Feb. 4 before a joint session of the legislature. That will be followed by six weeks of House and Senate appropriations committee hearings on the budget.

In Last Week's Committee Action –

- * **[HB 283](#): Right-to-Know Fees; amended on the House floor and recommitted to the House Appropriations Committee.** The bill amends the Right-to-Know Law to allow a public entity to charge an additional standard fee for a request for records that will be used for a commercial purpose. The bill would provide an exclusion for journalists, non-commercial scientific institutions, and nonprofit educational institutions.
- * **[HB 1069](#): Public Meeting Agendas; passed by the House, 196-0.** The bill would amend the Sunshine Act to require public agencies, including school districts, to post the agenda of action items to be considered at least 24 hours prior to the public meeting and post that agenda on the agencies website and in the “principal office location” no later than the first business day following the meeting at which the agenda was changed.
- * **[HB 2039](#): Media Advertising Statement; passed by the House State Government Committee.** The bill amends the Taxpayer-Funded Advertising Transparency Act. The act requires Commonwealth agencies that purchase paid media advertising to include a notice that the advertising was paid for with taxpayer dollars. The bill would expand the application of this notice requirement to grantees or contractors that use taxpayer money to purchase paid media advertising. Further, the legislation includes some clarifications to the act, including further prescribing what constitutes print advertising and broadcast advertising to ensure that all forms of media are subject to the requirements. **Note:** *During committee consideration of the bill, Rep. Joseph Ciresi (D-Montgomery) questioned if television advertisement for cyber charter schools will now have to say “paid for with taxpayer dollars.” Committee staff indicated that it would depend on how their contract is written. Rep. Garth Everett (R-Lycoming), chairman of the committee, said he is willing to work with Rep. Ciresi on a floor amendment that would require cyber charter schools advertisements to say that the advertisement was paid with taxpayer dollars.*

* [HB 2046](#): **Special Education Certification; amended and approved by the House Education Committee.** As amended, the bill would permit the Department of Education to continue to issue a special education PreK-8 or 7-12 certification to any student enrolled in a teacher preparation program at an institution of higher education or approved alternative preparation program prior to December 31, 2021. The special education certificate change was made through legislation in 2019 rather than going through the regulatory process as is usual for certification changes. **PASA supports the bill as amended.**

* [HR 622](#): **School Board Recognition; passed the House, 194-0.** The resolution designates the month of January 2020 as "School Director Recognition Month" in Pennsylvania.

Committee Calendar –

Tuesday, Jan 21

House Education Committee: 11:00 a.m., Room G-50, Irvis Office Building

Public hearing on Pennsylvania's cyber education and [HB 1897](#). The bill, introduced by committee chairman Curt Sonney would require all school districts to create a cyber learning program by the start of the 2021-22 school year and would dissolve all current cyber charter schools at the end of the 2020-21 school year. **Dr. Eric Eshbach**, superintendent of the Northern York County SD and chair of the PASA Legislative Committee, will testify at the hearing. **PASA is supporting this bill.**

Tuesday, Feb. 18

Senate Appropriations Committee: 10:00 a.m., Hearing Room 1, North Office Building

Budget Hearing: Independent Fiscal Office

House Appropriations Committee: 1:00 p.m., Room 140, Main Capitol

Budget Hearing: Independent Fiscal Office

Thursday, Feb. 27

Senate Appropriations Committee: Budget Hearings, Hearing Room 1, North Office Building

10:00 a.m. - Department of Education

3:00 p.m. - Department of Community & Economic Development (*manages EITC program*)

Monday, March 2

House Appropriations Committee: Budget Hearings, Room 140, Main Capitol

10:00 a.m. - Department of Education

1:00 p.m. - Department of Education (continued)

In State News...

Pennsylvania's 'Access Gap' – Students of color in Pennsylvania are far less likely than their white peers to have access to small classes, certified teachers and advanced coursework, according to a pair of new studies. The so-called "access" gap in Pennsylvania is among the nation's largest, both studies claim, distinguishing the Keystone state as one of the America's worst when it comes to educational equity for poor and non-white students. The findings come from two research projects released this month, both of which use a data set released by the federal government in 2018. Last week, Philadelphia-based nonprofit Research for Action unveiled an "Educational Opportunity Dashboard" that looks at high school students across the country and tries to determine whether they attend schools with quality educators, good school climate and challenging curriculum. From those three categories, RFA generated an "average opportunity score" for each state — a composite of factors such as student-teacher ratio, suspension rate, absenteeism rate, teacher experience and access to Advanced Placement classes. Earlier this month, the national nonprofit EdTrust — which is headed by former U.S. Secretary of Education John King — released a report that examined whether students of color took advanced classes at the same rate as white students. Again, Pennsylvania lagged well behind the national average. *Read the rest of the story:* ["Pa. Provides Some of the Worst Opportunities for Students of Color, Reports Say"](#) (from WITF, 1/15/20).

In National News...

From AASA –

* **Small Rural Schools Achievement Grant:** (from AASA) Last week, the Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education announced a new application process for school districts applying for the Small Rural School Achievement (SRSA) Program. The impetus for this change stems from a review of the SRSA application, which determined that the applicant burden could be significantly reduced while maintaining appropriate accountability guardrails for the grant-making process. As a result of these actions, a much simpler application will be open to districts on February 3, 2020. [Click here](#) for noticeable highlights from the new 2020 SRSA application.

* **Lead and Copper Rule:** In December, the Environmental Protection Agency announced that the agency would extend the Lead and Copper Rule comment period until February 12, 2020, in response to a request by a group of allied water utility companies. Consequently, this gives us approximately one more month to let the EPA know loud and clear that this rule doesn't go far enough to ensure the safety of our schools' drinking water, and should be accompanied by increased federal funding for districts to pursue lead remediation. As part of this effort, AASA encourages school leaders to comment on the rule. If you're looking for directions on how to make your voice heard, [check out our call-to-action here](#), which provides a template and step-by-step guide on how to publicly comment.

Guidance on School Prayer – President Trump promoted new [guidance on prayer in schools](#) in an Oval Office event last week, part of several steps the administration will take to mark National Religious Freedom Day, administration officials said. That guidance—which comes as the president continues election-year outreach to Evangelical Christians—does not introduce any new legal requirements, but it does outline existing legal precedents. The new school prayer guidance, which will be published in the Federal Register Thursday Jan. 21, reiterates requirements under existing law that school districts must annually certify to their state departments of education that they have "no policy prohibiting participation in constitutionally protected prayer," officials said. State education departments must have a process for fielding complaints the right to prayer has been violated, and they must report any complaints or lawsuits over school prayer to the federal Education Department, the guidance says. The guidance also reiterates that student religious organizations must be given the same access to school facilities as secular groups, which the Education Department previously noted in 1998 guidance that is still in place. *Read the rest of the story:* ["What Trump's Action on School Prayer Means \(and Doesn't Mean\) for Students and Educators"](#) (from *Education Week*, 1/16/20).

Relaxing School Lunch Nutrition Standards – The U.S. Department of Agriculture Friday announced plans to further relax heightened school meal nutrition standards created by the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, which was championed by former first lady Michelle Obama. The proposed changes won praise from some school nutrition workers, who said they would give them more flexibility to manage tight budgets and the logistics of feeding students. But children's health advocacy groups said the new rules may serve to erode progress in tackling issues like childhood obesity. They warned that one of the changes, which would allow entrees to be served à la carte, could lead to students eating more foods like pizza and burgers. *Read the rest of the story:* ["Trump Team Plans to Relax School Lunch Rules. Opponents Warn of 'Junk Food Loophole'"](#) (from *Education Week*, 1/17/20).

Courts: Limits on Parent Communication with School Staff – A federal appeals court has upheld a school district's plan limiting a parent's communications with school personnel over his daughter's education because the district said his interactions had become "unproductive" and some staff members felt "bullied and intimidated." The parent, a Washington state father identified in court papers as L.F., sued the Lake Washington No. 414 School District under the First Amendment. He lost in both a federal district court and in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit, in San Francisco. "We agree with the trial court that the communication plan was a reasonable effort to manage a parent's relentless and unproductive communications with district staff," said an unanimous three-judge panel on Jan. 17 in *L.F. v. Lake Washington School District No 414*. *Read the rest of the story:* ["Court Upholds District's Limits on Parent's Communications With School Staff"](#) (from *Education Week*, 1/18/20).

FYI – Free Webinar: Online Assessment

The Consortium for School Networking ([CoSN](#)) and its state affiliate chapter, Pennsylvania Association for

Educational Communications and Technology ([PAECT](#)), support the work of current and aspiring superintendents and district leadership teams in leading all aspects of digital learning transformations. Last month CoSN focused on the strategies necessary for leading digital learning with an emphasis on succeeding with 1:1 implementations. [CoSN's Leadership for Digital Learning Critical Issues Guide](#) provides – in a concise, single-page format - an itemized check list for each of the main systems (both human and technological) that need to be properly established when implementing 1:1 technology for learning initiatives.

This month CoSN focuses on how and why school district leadership teams collaborate on the implementation of online assessments within a school district system. As an ever increasing number of school districts launch online assessments as part of their standard practice, school leaders are learning that the challenges associated with implementing and leveraging online assessments to drive student learning are far more complex than simply adding technology. Today technology is an essential tool for planning, creating, delivering, and evaluating successful instruction. Online assessments are becoming routine within many school settings and are used not solely for summative or high stakes testing, but also for formative measures of learning as well. It takes a coordinated leadership team effort among multiple district level departments to execute online assessments successfully. The [CoSN Critical Focus Area: Issue One Pager on Online Assessment](#) offers nine key recommendations for leveraging online assessment capability and capacity.

CoSN, in partnership with [edWeb.net](#), hosts *The EmpowerED Superintendent* monthly webinar series on topics that are essential for all educators engaged in leading digital transformations. The focus of the **February 10** webinar (5:00 pm ET) is “Online Assessment: An Effective, Coordinated, District Leadership Team Approach”. Three members of Pennsylvania’s **Hampton Township School District** leadership team (Dr. Michael Loughhead, Superintendent; Dr. Jacquelyn Removcik, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment; and Dr. Ed McKaveney, Director of Technology) share how they collaborate and effectively coordinate their work in order to successfully lead the implementation of online assessments as well as the strategic use of the resulting student learning data within all schools in their district. Learn more and register for this free webinar as well as access recordings of previously broadcast CoSN/edWeb webinars at <https://home.edweb.net/supers/>.

If your school or district would like more information about joining CoSN or getting more involved with CoSN, please contact Brian Calvary, CAE, CoSN Director of Membership and Chapters, at bcalvary@cosn.org.

On the Calendar...

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| Jan. 22 | Women’s Caucus Board meeting (virtual) |
| Jan. 23 | Joint Boards Dinner (at the PSBA office) |
| Jan. 24 | Board of Governors’ meeting (PASA office) |
| Jan. 29 | PASA Webinar: Six Critical Components of a Trauma-Informed School |